

McKendree has continued to evolve physically as well as academically. The university now includes two campuses in Kentucky as well as the main campus in Lebanon, Illinois. It also hosts off-campus offerings at nearby Scott Air Force Base, in addition to other locations in Illinois and Kentucky. In 2006, McKendree opened the new Hettnerhausen Center for the Arts which has rapidly developed into one of the premier performing arts centers in the region.

As McKendree has continued to expand and evolve, it has earned more wide-spread recognition of the excellent academic reputation it has long enjoyed locally. Recent awards and rankings include being ranked among the top 14 percent of "Comprehensive Colleges—Bachelor's" by U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges 2007 and U.S. News & World Report's "Great Schools, Great Prices" ranking.

McKendree University has come a long way from its humble beginnings in 1828, with 72 students in two rented sheds. It now boasts a dynamic, multi-state campus with a full range of extra-curricular offerings to complement its excellent academic programs. Throughout its impressive evolution, however, McKendree University has remained true to its roots. Students still come first at McKendree. The focus of the entire McKendree community on enabling each student to fulfill his or her potential continues to mark McKendree University as "Illinois' First and Finest."

Madam Speaker, I am proud to say that my wife, Dr. Georgia Costello, received her undergraduate degree from McKendree and is a member of the Board of Trustees of the University.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Board of Trustees, administration, faculty and students of McKendree University on the occasion of their 180th Anniversary.

#### RECOGNIZING INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING WEEK

**HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK**

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 6, 2008*

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the importance of International Networking Week from February 4–8, 2008, and the prominent role my constituents play in preserving our competitiveness in the global economy.

As the co-chair of the U.S.-China Working group and a member of the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee, I know first-hand the importance that international relationships play in both diplomacy and in business.

Of special importance are organizations that create bridges between people for the mutual benefit of their members. As technology continues to bring us closer together, the relationships we forge will be more crucial than ever for companies seeking to grow their businesses.

Whether it is one of the many multinational companies in the 10th Congressional District or a locally-owned small business, networking will continue to play a vital role in the growth of the U.S. economy. From manufacturing to

distribution to the point-of-sale, we are stronger for having people throughout the world work together to expand their opportunities.

#### PRESIDENT'S FY2009 BUDGET REQUEST

**HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN**

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, February 6, 2008*

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern about the budget request that President Bush transmitted to Congress earlier this week. By cutting programs important to working families and ignoring the significant economic downturn our Nation is facing, the administration has yet again demonstrated that its priorities are not those of the American people.

Our Nation is facing the real threat of a recession, and our government should be doing everything in its power to get our economy moving and to protect the American people from financial hardship. While the President has said he wants to work with Congress on an economic stimulus package, his budget request contains a number of devastating cuts to important programs that will make it even harder for our citizens to make ends meet.

Despite widespread recognition that fixing the U.S. economy will require addressing our weak housing market, the President's proposal only adds to the uncertainty that families are facing. This budget would slash funding for public housing and rental assistance programs, eliminating critical aid for lower income families, the elderly and minorities, many of whom may be facing foreclosure as a result of the subprime mortgage crisis. In Rhode Island, 400 families are at risk of losing their homes under the President's cuts to Section 8 vouchers. At the same time, he proposes to slash the Community Development Block Grant, CDBG, program, which provides vital funding for economic and community development in our State's cities and counties.

A real economic plan should also include an investment in education and job training programs that will promote new employment and ensure that our workforce can adapt to the jobs of the future. Unfortunately, those programs are not priorities in the President's budget, and even proposed funding for No Child Left Behind, a program that the President touts as one of his biggest accomplishments, does not keep pace with the rate of inflation. If this budget is enacted, Rhode Island would see \$1.5 million less for after-school programs and a cut of almost \$6 million for career and technical education. Even with layoffs happening all across our State, President Bush wants to cut adult employment and training services, which would decrease Rhode Island's One-Stop Career System by half a million dollars.

I am deeply disappointed that the President's budget does not even begin to fully fund special education programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Furthermore, instead of fully funding our children's public schools, President Bush has turned back to the idea of school vouchers, renaming them Pell Grants for Kids. Vouchers will not solve our country's education woes, and naming them after Rhode Island's es-

teemed Senator Pell, who championed public education, is grossly misleading and dishonors the legacy of a great Senator.

The President's budget also fails to make higher education affordable for students with economic challenges. Rhode Island, where college tuition has risen 45 percent in 4 years, would see a \$7 million decrease in educational grants for college students. This budget also raises the funding level of Pell grants only by slashing funding for math and science courses that prepare students for technical programs after high school. To maintain our economic advantage in the coming years, our Nation must invest more in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. Cutting these programs is short-sighted and endangers our international competitiveness.

At a time when so many families are having difficulty paying their bills, this budget also shreds the safety net programs that help the poorest Americans. I am extremely disappointed that the President seeks to cut \$570 million from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Despite record heating oil prices, the President wants to slash this program by 22 percent, a cut that would harm our elderly. Ironically, the budget will cause the heating costs of the poor to rise by eliminating the Weatherization Assistance Program. A Federal program that helps people actually reduce their energy consumption. These programs are vital to places like Rhode Island where families are struggling with astronomical heating costs.

The budget also endangers health care programs for our Nation's poor and elderly by placing critical domestic health care programs on the chopping block. The President has proposed nearly \$200 billion in cuts to Medicare and Medicaid over the next 5 years. Unfortunately, he aims to achieve these cuts by reducing reimbursements to health care providers and charging Medicare beneficiaries higher premiums for prescription drug coverage and doctors' services. This could not come at a worse time for the 316,000 Rhode Island citizens that receive care under these vital programs and are seeing the costs of goods rise and their purchasing power fall. Furthermore, the health care slated to receive additional reimbursement cuts under this proposal continue to struggle to properly treat the Medicare population. While I agree that we need to address the long-term solvency of Medicare, any reforms should be implemented in a manner that is responsive to the needs of beneficiaries and providers alike.

Also contained within the President's budget is a suggested increase of \$20 billion over 5 years for the State Children's Health Insurance Program, SCHIP. This amount falls drastically short of the bipartisan SCHIP bill passed by Congress in 2007 that would have expanded coverage for millions of children. Unfortunately, the President vetoed that legislation and has instead presented us with a proposal that might well be insufficient to cover current SCHIP participants, let alone cover children who are currently eligible but not yet enrolled in the program. As a longtime supporter of SCHIP, I cannot stress how important this program is to our children, expectant mothers, and parents alike. It is my hope that we will be able to work in a bipartisan manner to ensure that this program receives a proper reauthorization.